

Western Farm Press

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Agritourism workshops scheduled by UC small farm program

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"Agritourism supports rural economies and strengthens urban-rural connections," said Penny Leff, statewide agritourism coordinator for the UC small farm program. "But the challenge is agritourism puts farmers and ranchers in a whole new business — the hospitality business — with a whole new set of skills to learn and a new network of colleagues to work with."

Findings from a 2009 survey of California agritourism operators confirmed that agritourism can indeed be a profitable venture for farmers and ranchers. But when it came to the topic of permits and regulations, nearly 70 percent of the comments mentioned slow, complicated processes or high fees and regulatory restrictions as major barriers to new operations.

The workshops will address challenges related to permits, regulations, planning, marketing and risk management. The primary goal of the workshops is professional development for people involved in agritourism and building a stronger infrastructure for successful agritourism in the region.

The "Growing Agritourism" workshops will include:

- Presentations from agritourism operators and other regional experts about the benefits, possibilities and challenges of California agritourism.
- Resources and tools for marketing, agritourism association development and effective collaboration.
- Facilitated discussions among local government staff members, agricultural professionals, tourism professionals and agritourism operators to share perspectives and help build regional networks

The workshops are sponsored by the UC Cooperative Extension small farm program and local partners, including the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Valley Land Alliance. Major funding to support the workshops is from Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.

Registration is now available online for each of the five regional workshops, at <http://ucanr.org/2011agtour>. Everyone involved in California agritourism is invited. Workshop dates and locations are as follows:

- Jan. 19: **San Joaquin Valley & Foothills**
- UC Cooperative Extension Merced County office, Merced
- Feb. 2: **Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta**
- Veterans Memorial Building, Rio Vista
- Feb. 16: **North Coast**
- Agricultural Center, UC Cooperative Extension Mendocino County, Ukiah
- Feb. 23: **North Valley & Mountains**
- Wetter Hall (next to UC Cooperative Extension Tehama County office), Red Bluff
- March 3: **Central Coast**
- UC Cooperative Extension Monterey County office, Salinas